



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
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'TIS THE SEASON TO BE COUNTED' **U.S. Farmers Give the Gift that Keeps Giving By Participating in 2007 Census**

The end of December is typically marked by crowds of people returning holiday gifts that don't fit or won't work, but this year, farmers across the country and in Virginia can give themselves a gift that won't be returned and will keep on giving even after the holiday season – a voice for their industry and their community.

By filling out the 2007 Census of Agriculture, farmers are investing in the future of rural America. Their responses will provide law makers, government organizations, town planners and individual farm operations with valuable information used to plan for services, facilities and other investments to benefit the industry and local communities.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the Census covers virtually every aspect of U.S. agriculture, providing a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them.

"The holiday season is a time of giving and receiving, but perhaps some of the best gifts are food, clothing and shelter provided to us with help from our U.S. farmers," said Herman Ellison, director of the NASS Virginia Field Office. "As many of us gather around the dinner table with good food and good friends, these essentials for everyday living often are taken for granted. By participating in the 2007 Census of Agriculture, farmers can ensure the vitality of the agriculture industry by providing a strong and unified voice about their needs and concerns."

The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics across the country and in Virginia, right down to the county level. NASS will mail out Census forms on December 28, 2007 to collect data for the 2007 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2008. Producers can return their forms by mail or, for the first time, they have the convenient option of filling out the Census online.

"Participating in the Census of Agriculture is one gift Virginia producers can give themselves and their local communities this holiday season" added Ellison. "It's a valuable investment into the future and well-being of agriculture and to the local communities here in Virginia."

For more information about the Census, visit www.agcensus.usda.gov or call toll-free (888) 4AG-STAT or (888) 424-7828. The Census is your voice, your future, and your responsibility.

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